

## Chronology of Events – Otsego County

January 26, 1837: Michigan becomes the 26<sup>th</sup> state in the Union.

1840: The land which now encompasses Otsego County was surveyed by the federal government and was given the name Okkudo County. At that time there were no permanent settlements in the area. Native Americans traversed the area, hunting for food and crossing from one side of Michigan to the other side.

1843: The County's name was changed to Otsego which comes from the Iroquois Indian language.

1850: Witness Tree: "This red pine marked June 17, 1850 during the original land survey of Michigan. The tree's diameter was eight inches at that time. The surveyor was William Burt." This tree and interpretive sign stands near the Pigeon River County State Forest headquarters in Corwith Township.

1854: David Ward, a young businessman in Saginaw, traveled to the Otsego Lake area and was amazed at the fine stands of cork pine he saw. He selected 16,000 acres of pine in what is now Hayes and Otsego Lake Townships and registered his claim at the land office in Ionia. Ward entered a major share of these pine stands for Smith, Dwight and Company, with controlling shares in the hands of A.A. Dwight, a prominent Detroit lumberman.

1861 -1865: Civil War. Michigan population at that time was 394,694 and sends 87,000 of its sons to the Civil War during that 4 year time period.

1862: The Homestead Act was enacted which gave free land to people willing to clear and settle in wilderness areas such as Otsego County.

1868: The first attempt at a permanent settlement occurred along Crooked Lake (now known as Manuka Lake) by A. A. Dwight. He needed to overcome two barriers that made the area difficult to access. The first was lack of a good land route for settlers and supplies. Dwight was instrumental in having a state road built from Torch Lake to Otsego Lake in 1870. This road became the main land route. The second was lack of a practical outlet for cut timber. He worked to have the North Branch of the Au Sable River designated as a log driving stream by the State legislature. Once the Au Sable was made suitable for log driving the lumbering business grew quickly. Logs from his and other companies could float logs downstate to the mills. With these two barriers overcome, settlers could now come, have employment, send for their families, and begin their new lives. As an incentive, The Smith, Dwight and Company offered free land to settlers.

1869: Otsego County lost a portion of land before its first settlers arrived. Hudson Township, which made up the northwest corner of Otsego County, was removed and added to Charlevoix to give it enough land to establish its own county government.

1871: The Great Chicago Fire created a huge demand for lumber to rebuild the city.

1872: The Jackson, Lansing & Saginaw Railroad reached Otsego Lake Village which is located at what is now the intersection of Old 27 south and Mancelona Road.

1872 Otsego Lake Village established and served as the first county seat. The village had stores, a boarding house, an opera house, saloon, hotel, newspaper, post office and school. Its population was 800 in 1884.

1874: Berryville (3 ½ miles southwest of Vanderbilt) forms with the arrival of John G. and Mary (Elder) Berry and their four children from Detroit. The businessman plans to build a school, store, water-powered grist mill, and sawmill.

March 12, 1875: Otsego County was established. Otsego Lake Township was detached from Antrim County and joined with Charlton, Livingston and Elmira Townships to make Otsego County. Otsego Lake Village was designated the county seat. Township names and year established map with dates (see page 26)

1875: The “Otsego Herald News” begins publication. Today, the newspaper is the “Gaylord Herald Times” and is published bi-weekly.

1877: The county seat was moved to Barnes (Gaylord)

1881: The Jackson, Lansing & Saginaw Railroad extends to Vanderbilt from Gaylord.

1882: County Poor Farm was established and located at Meecher and Allis Roads in Livingston Township. The facility closed in 1952 after 70 years of service.

1883: The community of Elmira (originally named Windsor) was platted. It is believed to be named for Elmira, New York.

1884: The Gaylord Masonic Lodge is chartered. In the early days of Otsego County, the Masonic Lodges played a vital role in the social life of the community. Charity Lodge #403 chartered in 1893 in Elmira, consolidated with the Gaylord Lodge in 1918. Alpha Lodge was chartered in 1906 in Johannesburg, consolidated with the Gaylord Lodge in 1918. Cyrene Lodge #352 was chartered in Vanderbilt in 1880, consolidated with the Gaylord Lodge in 1995 and the Lodges became known at Gaylord Cyrene Lodge #366.

1891: Brick courthouse built and used until replaced in 1967 with current City/County Building.



1894: The Gaylord branch of Dayton Last Block Works opens. The enterprise consisted of 27 buildings and covered 14 ½ acres. At its peak, DLBW had 100 employees. This company was once the largest of its kind in the world. It made shoe lasts, bowling pins, and golf club heads.

1901: Johannesburg is established by the Johannesburg Manufacturing Company. The

community was named after Johanna Hanson. Johanna's brother Rasmus Hanson was president of the Johannesburg Manufacturing Company.

1901: The Village of Vanderbilt is incorporated. The community is named for Cornelius Vanderbilt of New York who, after harvesting the timber, gave the land to the local residents.

1901: St. Mary Church – red brick – was completed and dedicated. Located on the southwest corner of Otsego Avenue and Mitchell Street in Gaylord. Today, the building is the Mt. Carmel Centre and is used for performing arts. A state historical marker was dedicated in 2005.

1904: The Boyne City, Gaylord & Alpena Railroad extends from Elmira to Gaylord. By 1918 it was completed and reached its destination of Alpena. This provided an important transportation route for east – west travel.

1910: Gaylord Motor Car Company was established and went bankrupt in 1913. Approximately 350 cars were manufactured during its four years of existence. The only known Gaylord Car in existence is on display at the Gaylord – Otsego County Chamber of Commerce Visitors' Center.

1910: The cannon on the courthouse lawn is dedicated in memory of the Civil War veterans.

1913: Gaylord's Main Street is paved.

1913: Ten years after the Wright brother's successful flight, the first airplane flies into Otsego County.

1917: Seven elk are transplanted near Wolverine and eventually migrate to the Pigeon River State Forest in Corwith Township.

1919: Sugar Bowl Restaurant opens. It is one of the oldest family-owned businesses in Otsego County.

1920: Otsego Lake State Park was established on the east side of Otsego Lake. The property was purchased from a lumber company who had lumbered it off. It encompasses 62 acres and provides more than a half mile of sandy beach. In 1935, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built buildings and made other improvements to the grounds.

1923: Sawyer Township is established. Created using the eastern portion of Dover Township, Sawyer Township existed from 1923 until 1934 at which time it was consolidated with Charlton Township.

1926: The first golf course opened in Otsego County – Gaylord County Club

1927: Dr. Gordon McKillop opened a 12 bed hospital on the second floor of his home located in Gaylord on the northeast corner of Main and Oak Streets. The hospital closed in 1936.

1928: US 27 – the main north south highway - is paved.

1928: The Mackinac and Au Sable State Forests were created. These two state forests cover a total of several hundred acres in Charlton, Chester, Hayes and Otsego Lake Townships.

1929: The Great Depression

1935: Gaylord Kiwanis Club is formed

1937: The Northern Michigan Tuberculosis Sanitarium opens its 128-bed facility in Livingston Township. The four story Sanitarium along with five accessory buildings occupy the 160 acre complex located 1 mile north of Gaylord. It later became a State Hospital for the mentally handicapped and named the Alpine Center. It closed in 1980 which was a loss of 200 jobs. (See 1981 the J. Richard Yuill Alpine Center for an update on this facility)

1939: Rural Electric Association (REA) brings electricity to rural county residents.

1939: Otsego Ski Club opens. In 1955, Alan Gornick purchased the resort from the estate of Donald McLouth. Today, the 4000 acre resort has 105 guest rooms, 2 golf courses, ski hill, and restaurant.

1940: Otsego County Chamber of Commerce organized. Now named Gaylord/ Otsego County Chamber of Commerce, it has 600 members.

1941 – 1945: World War II has a major impact on Otsego County.

1941: Higgins Industries – now H&H Tube opens manufacturing plant in Vanderbilt.

1945: Standard Products opens in Bagley Township.

1951: Otsego Memorial Hospital opened with 34 beds. Today there are 53 beds for acute-care patients, 34 beds in the skilled nursing facility, McReynolds Hall. The hospital employs over 500 people. OMH outpatient visits exceed 45,000 annually.



1951: Glen's Market opens first store by C. Glen and Doris Catt. The company expands to 26 stores and about 2500 associates. Sold in 1998 to Spartan Foods.

1956: "Our Hometown", Vanderbilt's newspaper begins its weekly publication.

1956: Gaylord Rotary Club is chartered

1957: The Mackinac Bridge opens connecting Michigan's two peninsulas.

1958: The Gaylord Industrial Development Corporation is formed.

1960s: Michaywe' land development is formed. The 2000 acre planned unit development (PUD) includes 750 homes, 2 golf courses, and a clubhouse.

1962: The completion of I-75 through Otsego County contributed to the increase in tourism. Restaurants, gas stations, motels, resorts and recreation areas have benefited from being located on this new, major transportation route.

1963: Alpine Motif is introduced to downtown Gaylord by local businessman Gordon Everett.

1965: U.S. Plywood opens manufacturing plant in Gaylord. The firm originally manufactured particle board in the United States under a Swiss patent. (this another connection with the Swiss / Alpine theme) U.S. Plywood merged with Champion International in the 1970s and became part of Georgia-Pacific Corporation (G-P). In late 2005, Koch Industries, a privately held, diversified industrial products group purchased G-P. The plant closed in 20xx.

1965: The first Alpine Festival, later renamed Alpenfest, was held in Gaylord. This community celebration honors its sister city Pontrasina, Switzerland and provides a week long of entertainment for local residents as well as attracting thousands of visitors.

1965: Countywide zoning is enacted

1968: Johannesburg School and Lewiston School consolidate forming the Johannesburg-Lewiston Area Schools. The elementary school is located in Lewiston and the high school is in Johannesburg. The district covers 291 square miles. Enrollment for 2005 was 879 students.

1971: The Gaylord Air Industrial Park west of I-75 on Dickerson Road was developed.

1971: The Roman Catholic Diocese of Gaylord was created and includes 21 counties in the northern half of the Lower Peninsula. St. Mary Cathedral, with Edmund Szoka as its first bishop, Gaylord became the smallest diocese city in the United States.

1971: Big Lake School, the last one-room school in Otsego County, closed and consolidated with Gaylord Community Schools. The building was renovated and now used as the Chester Township Hall.

1972: United Way is established in Otsego County.

1980: Legislative compromise allowed phased oil and gas drilling in the Pigeon River Country State Forest.

1974: McDonald's is the first fast food restaurant to open in Otsego County.

1981: Alten Zimmer opens with 46 apartments for senior citizens and expanded to a total of 70 housing units in 1985.

1981: RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) was established in Otsego County.

1981: The J. Richard Yuill Alpine Center opens after renovating the former TB Sanitarium. The 160 acre complex is named in honor of long time County Commissioner, J. Richard Yuill of Corwith Township. Today the Center is the location of the Gaylord High School, The University Center at Gaylord, M-TEC Kirtland – Gaylord, and various county, state, and federal agencies.

1981: First “big box” retail chain store opens in Otsego County. K-Mart opens a store at the corner of Old 27 South (Otsego Avenue) and Grandview.

1982: The sale of Green Timbers in Corwith Township to the state adds 6000 acres to the Pigeon River County State Forest.

1984: First special elk hunt since 1965 is conducted.

1985: The Otsego County Library moves from its location at the Courthouse to 700 W. Otsego Avenue in Gaylord. There are branch locations in Vanderbilt and Johannesburg.

1986: County voters defeat zoning request for the proposed Borden chemical resin plant.

1986: Former-President Jimmy Carter shops at the Alpine IGA for supplies during his hunting excursion to the Pigeon River Country Sate Forest.

1986: Gaylord Area Convention and Tourism Bureau is created. The bureau is funded by a 2 percent room assessment fee paid by guests of area hotel, motels, and resorts.

1987: Otsego County celebrates Michigan’s Sesquicentennial with a variety of events through out the year. Interest in local history grew and resulted in reactivating the Historical Society.

1987: U.S. Plywood is sold to Georgia-Pacific, largest forest wood products corporation in the nation.

1988: Project Nature opens near Vanderbilt

1989: AREC (Alpine Regional Educational Center) was established as a consortium of colleges.

1990: Wal-Mart opens in the White Pine Shopping Center located on M-32 West in Bagley Township.

1992: Friendship Center opens. The facility provides temporary housing for homeless people. Originally located at the Alpine Center (Christianson Building) moved in 1997 to a former motel on Old 27 South across from the Otsego Lake State Park.

1992: Otsego County Historical Museum opens on Main Street in downtown Gaylord.

1993: New high school for Gaylord Community Schools is constructed at the Alpine Center.

1994: Bottle Cap Museum featuring Coca-Cola memorabilia opens in Sparr.

1995: The National Weather Service opens 2 miles west of Waters on Passenheim Road in Otsego Lake Township.

1996: Sportsplex opens. Located on Gornick Avenue, the recreation facility is funded by a county special millage and provides an indoor swimming pool and ice rink.

1997: Volunteer Center of Otsego County is established.

1998: 100 miles per hour wind create \$10 million in damages. Portion of Otsego County are declared a disaster area.

2000: As the result of a Gaylord/Otsego County Chamber of Commerce Task Force investigation, the Otsego County Economic Alliance is established. Its first executive director, Jeff Ratcliffe, is hired in 2001.

2001: Pavilion on Court is constructed east of the Courthouse over Court Street between Main and First and used for Farmers Market, festivals, and special events.

2002: The University Center at Gaylord and Kirtland M-TEC – Gaylord open.

2004: “One County-One Vision” a year long community visioning process undertaken by community leaders to explore Otsego County’s future.

2004: Edelweiss Village Shopping Center opens on Dickerson Road at the I-75 exit 282. Retail stores include Super Wal-Mart, Lowe’s, Radio Shack, China One, etc.

2006 Roundabout built on Old 27 North at the Alpine Center entrance

2007 The first annual “Thunder Over Waters” is held on Sunday of the Memorial Day weekend

2008 “Mistaken Identity” is published and gains national media attention. The book tells the story of a 2006 tragic accident involving Gaylord native Whitney Cerak who was believed to have been killed. However, five weeks later it was discovered that she was alive and had thought to have been instead Laura Van Ryn who was recovering from a coma as a result of the accident.